THE RHINOCEROUS THAT AWAITS

Hakuin was the Japanese Zen Master who revived the Zen sect in his country. In the China of that era, Zen had almost disappeared and in Japan the training was quickly ebbing away. The monks in the Japaneese Zen monasteries were taking it easy, reading and gardening, but they meditated as little as possible. The teachers were slack and undemanding, forgetting about the need for a rigorous sitting practice or the emphasis upon solving koans. They passed on to their disciples only the merest hints of understanding and insight.

As a young monk, Hakuin was soon dissatisfied with his superiors. He wandered about from place to place looking for the answers which would satisfy him. His training became a haphazard affair, as he went from master to master, scroll to scroll, monastery to monastery, finding that each said something diffrent and none provided answers. Too often whenever he thought that he had found something, he would meet a pilgrim or a hermit or a master, who either ignored him or made him feel ridiculous.

Eventually, Hakuin began meditating in and out of the way places by himself. Real insight into the nature of the world and the self began to come. Eventually he felt he knew everything, and he began to teach. He felt secure that he had obtained everything that he had sought.

During one of his later wanderings, he was stunned by seeing a rhinocerous for the first time. It was part of a traveling circus and the first time that such an animal had ever been in Japan. Hakuin was impressed by the power, shape, and exotic nature of the extraordinary animal. The greatest shock to Hakuin, though, occured when the huge animal looked at him with its small bright eyes and then shook its great head. Hakuin suddenly realized how little he knew.